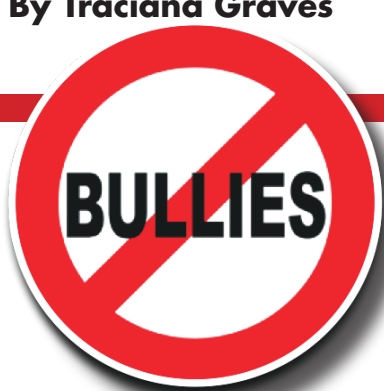


Student Activities JOURNAL

MAKE COLLEGE YOUR BEST FOUR YEARS: 5 STEPS TO A BULLY FREE CAMPUS

By Traciana Graves



BULLYING, which includes

- HARASSMENT
- HAZING
- SEXUAL ASSAULT
- TAUNTING
- and CYBER BULLYING

DOESN'T JUST DISAPPEAR when you get to college.

You've probably heard people tell you how much your four years in college will change you in ways you can't even imagine. Even though you're transitioning into adult life and all the new things that come with it, some things never change; bullying is one.

Until recently college bullying has been overlooked. The rash of bullycides and homicides on college campuses has drawn attention to the fact that bullying, which includes harassment, hazing, sexual assault, taunting and cyber bullying, continues throughout your college years.

Do you want your campus to be defined by a tragedy such as the tragedies that have occurred on college campuses throughout the country in the past year? Thought not.

So, how do you prevent bullying and associated tragedies on your campus? It's really simple. Follow these five simple steps to prevent bullying and help create a productive, high-achieving sustainably safe campus community:

STEP 1 UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE
1 in 4 college students have reported being bullied, and it is widely believed that more students are bullied and simply do not report it. Many students are not clear on what bullying really is, and therefore don't report incidents because they're unclear about what they should say or who to go to.

To set the record straight, bullying is the misuse of power to influence or intimidate. Bullying is any action that is

- Aggressive
- Intimidating and
- Repeated

STEP 3 EDUCATE YOURSELF AND YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THE FACTS

- 18.5 percent of students report being bullied in college
- One third of all suicides of young adults aged 15-24 are linked to bullying
- 42 percent of students are suspected of being cyber bullied but don't report it

Remember that there are lots of times when you might think something is funny or harmless that can be construed as bullying. These "funny" actions can land you in federal prison, and if you are found guilty you could be prosecuted for stalking, hate crimes, or terroristic threats. Think twice before doing anything you might not want done to you- this is the most important question you can ask yourself and the most important piece of information to bring to the table.

STEP 5 TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT INCIDENTS FROM OCCURRING ON CAMPUS

Sometimes, speaking up isn't enough; you have to walk the talk and put your money where your mouth is. There are probably various awareness groups on your campus, such as One in Four, that educate students on the variety of risks, such as sexual assault or hazing, that can happen on campus. You can also start your own group or visit various campus organizations to form a council of clubs that have similar messages of respect, dignity, tolerance and appreciation for diversity.

STEP 2 RECOGNIZING THE EFFECTS

Bullying doesn't just affect the bully and the target, or the person being bullied. Bullying affects the entire campus community. Effects include:

- Depression and suicide
- Lack of appreciation of diversity
- Stress and anxiety
- Low academic achievement and high drop-out rates
- High-risk behavior, including drug and alcohol abuse and sexual promiscuity.

STEP 4 INTERVENE IN INCIDENTS YOU SEE OR EXPERIENCE

Instead of being a bystander, become an upstander. Take action when you see or hear of an incident of bullying. Instead of letting the incident continue, step in and let the bully or bullies know that you don't find the behavior acceptable. If you feel uncomfortable standing up to upperclassmen, tell your RA or Dean of Students.

Find out what the training and reporting protocols are on your campus. Are RA's trained in bullying prevention and intervention? Is there a specific office or person to whom you should report incidents of bullying? Gather as much information as you can and share it with as many students as you can to empower them to take steps to become upstanders as well. If there are no training or reporting protocols, ask that some be put into place! Visit our website for step-by-step instructions on how to start your own Bully Free Zone Campus Alliance at http://www.projectbullyfreezone.com/college_alliance.html

Don't forget to KEEP IN TOUCH with your high school friends- THEY ARE THERE TO SUPPORT YOU even if miles separate you!

IF YOU ARE A BULLYING VICTIM:

- **Do NOT retaliate.** It can be REALLY difficult not to, but retaliation is not the same thing as standing up for yourself. Retaliation will simply fuel future incidents and promote a vicious cycle of bullying.
- **Report the incident immediately.** If you know who you should report an incident to, report it immediately. If not, go directly to your Dean of Students. You can even report the incident anonymously through email or written letter if you prefer, but if you don't report it, the school won't know it's a problem and won't take steps to protect you and other students who may experience similar situations.
- **Talk to people that make you comfortable and happy.** Don't feel bad if you haven't made close friends within the first few weeks at school. Making friends takes time! However, keep in mind that you are NOT alone. Your parents, guardians, siblings, professors, old teachers and high school friends are only some of the network that you have as an outlet for your thoughts and emotions. Don't forget to keep in touch with your high school friends- they are there to support you even if miles separate you!
- **Seek professional help.** Take advantage of the "free" services offered on campus- you're paying for them with your tuition money, after all! Speak with a counselor or therapist, even if you aren't feeling particularly bothered about an incident, just to get any residual feelings off your chest. Who knows, you might discover a thing or two about yourself in the process! Remember, sessions are completely confidential- you don't even have to let anyone know you're going to see a counselor if you don't want to!
- **Record all communication with the bully.** Write down names, dates, and the nature of the incident. If the incident is online, print out and save any proof, such as emails, chat messages, Facebook posts, etc. If the communication is telephonic, save voice mails, texts and call dates and times. Proof is helpful during an investigation.
- **Keep your parents in the loop.** So you're an adult, but that doesn't mean you should cut your parents off entirely! Let your parents know what's going on in your life and call home every once in a while, if for nothing else but to thank them for helping you get to where you are today.

DON'T LET BULLYING INTERFERE WITH SOME OF THE BEST FOUR YEARS OF YOUR LIFE. TAKE A STAND NOW.

To download additional resources and/or to share your experiences on the Project Bully Free Zone Virtual Online Community visit www.projectbullyfreezone.com. You can also contact Traciana at tg@projectbullyfreezone.com to bring Project Bully Free Zone to your campus today!



Traciana Graves, Speaker, Singer and Anti-Bully Expert, founded Project Bully Free Zone, to prevent further tragedies like the one that resulted in the hazing related death of her step-brother, Joel Harris. Project Bully Free Zone's empowering workshops and presentations use storytelling, song, and experiential education to provide critical strategies to create a bully free zone on your campus. To learn more about bringing Project Bully Free Zone to your campus contact Traciana at tg@projectbullyfreezone.com today!